

CHRISTIANITY

An Imperialist Ideology

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I

Church as a Tool of Imperialism in the Modern World

Major T.R. Vedantham

Christianity, throughout the ages, has been a politically oriented religion. The unholy church-state alliance which began at the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. acquired a set pattern at the end of the 4th century A.D. under Emperor Constantine. In the centuries that followed, the church-state relationship played an important part in the fortunes of the Empire of Byzantium and was further strengthened under Charlemagne.

The wars that the European countries waged against each other then and in the period that followed, were all instigated by the Popes, who claimed both temporal and spiritual power. After this came the Protestant Reformation, when Europe was convulsed by a series of wars, called the “wars of Religion”, caused by the hostility between the Protestant and the Catholic blocs.

The French revolution towards the end of the 18th century and the upsurge of rationalism in the 19th century did weaken the power and influence of the Church on the Government. But it did not weaken the fanaticism of the

Church which now became active in Asia and Africa through numerous missionaries.

Medieval Europe was feudal. So was the Church and as a rule they worked hand in glove and shared power. The European invaders brought this tradition with them to Asia and Africa and have always been trying to seize political power.

Christianity proper came to India with the Nestorians, also known as Syrian Christians, by about the end of the 4th century from Antioch and Damascus. Persecuted in their own country they sought asylum in Kerala and were well received and looked after. Having no proselytizing zeal, they had a peaceful co-existence with the Hindus for centuries.

Christianity as an aggressive, ecclesiastical colonialism of the European invaders starts with the advent of the Portuguese under Vasco da Gama. The Portuguese combined trade with proselytism and colonial expansion. The ships of Vasco da Gama had the Cross painted on their sails, but at the same time carried cannons on the deck with which to frighten the Zamorin. His seamen were mostly pirates while at sea, but they took holy orders in the Church when they came ashore for long periods. Force was freely used for conversion. After they got a tiny bit of a territorial footing here, they introduced a branch of the notorious Spanish Inquisition in Goa.¹

Vasco da Gama's initial efforts to gain converts were not very successful. He however, made it clear to the King of Portugal that territories in this country could not be permanently and successfully held unless the people were made to adopt the Catholic Religion and made loyal to the Church. The king of Portugal then asked Ignatius Loyola to send a battalion of Jesuits to India. Ignatius Loyola could

not grant this request immediately. But in 1541, St. Francis Xavier was sent. He was in India for about four years. During this period he is said to have converted at least fifty thousand fishermen along the West Coast.

The fishermen in the southwestern and the southeastern coastal regions were being constantly harassed by pirates. One Christian fisherman living at that time in Goa persuaded the fishermen of the Kerala coast to apply to the Portuguese Viceroy for help. The Portuguese were themselves pirates and were only too willing to do away with their rivals on the Arabian coast. So the Viceroy agreed, subject to the condition that the whole community became Christian and subjects of the King of Portugal. As an initial move, the members of the delegation were baptized. A fleet was sent, and the pirates roaming about the West Coast were dispersed, as also on the Coromandal Coast. A few weeks later, the rest of the group of fishermen were also baptized.

St. Francis Xavier, about this time, wrote to the King of Portugal that the only hope of mass conversions on the West Coast lay in the use of the temporal power of the State. The king responded by issuing orders that in Goa and other Portuguese settlements “all idols shall be sought out and destroyed and severe penalties shall be laid upon all such as shall dare to make an idol or shall shelter or hide a Brahmin.”² He also ordered that special privileges should be given to Christians so that it acts as an incentive for conversion.

This work was followed by Robert de Nobili, the Italian Jesuit who established himself at Madurai in 1605. He is said to have baptized 87 Brahmins, and about a lakh of non-Brahmins. But they all melted away after his death. He was in the long run a failure.³ This was due among other

things to the fact that Christianity was highly exclusive and ridden with untenable dogmas and doctrines. Hence a compromise formula of coexistence before a final transition could not work. One other important reason that contributed to his failure was that his approach to conversion was somewhat non-political and so he did not get adequate support from the Government of Portugal as well as from the Church.⁴

The Protestant missions came to India in the beginning of the 18th century with the landing of German Lutherans at Tranquebar in 1706. Right from the beginning the educational institutions of the missions identified themselves with the political interests of the Government. Even as early as two years after the First war of Independence (1857), Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister of England, announced that it was in the interests of Britain to provide for the diffusion of Christianity throughout the length and breadth of India. The Secretary of State, Lord Halifax, appended another statement to it: "Every additional Christian is an additional bond of union with this country and an additional source of strength to the Empire."⁵

After 1857, the British were genuinely afraid of interfering with the religious setup of the country. Soon they realized that there was not that much of a risk. They first permitted Christian missionary activities to a limited extent. It paid good dividends. Then they went all out in support of the missions.⁶ This policy they have continued with American collaboration after independence. The attitude of the Government of India has been one of supreme indifference. The crux of the problem is that the people at the helm of affairs do not understand the seriousness of the threat.

Seventy years of mission work made it clear to the missionaries that the depressed, the untouchables and others at the lower strata of Hindu society were alone amenable and willing to come into the Christian fold. In 1920, the Jesuit missions sent a report to the Pope that there was no hope of the educated elite, the upper castes and the intelligentsia, ever becoming Christian. But the Harijan communities were excellent targets for their proselytizing activities. It was also clear that even with these communities, conversion by faith was out of question. Economic aid and welfare measures as incentives were alone applicable. The object was to build up numbers and they were to be constituted as a separate community isolated from the rest of the people. Disruption of Indian society would thereby follow. The position was the same with regards to the tribals.

Different methods were adopted to keep the churchgoer loyal to the British Empire. One of the common practices in most of the churches was to read out chapters 2 of 1 Timothy which runs as follows: "First of all then I urge that petitions, prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who hold high positions that with all reverence and dignity we may lead a quiet and undisturbed life... etc." This Biblical exhortation was interpreted to mean that Christians should be loyal to the British Government and should not have any truck with the "agitators" of the national movement.

The political ideology of Christian missionary has followed the same pattern in different countries during the last one century and more. The missionaries go for the oppressed and the rejects of every society, give them inducements, economic aid, etc. and then prop them up as

a force in support of the colonial rule which in most cases was the British Government of the country.

The same thing happened in China in the 19th century. The missionaries built up a Chinese Christian community loyal to the foreign rulers and hostile to their own country. The part that they played in the "Arrow War" and the "Opium War" is a sordid tale. About a hundred years ago the Dowager Empress of China complained: "First the missionary, then the trader, then the gunboat, and then the land-grabbin. This is the order of events in the Chinese minds." It ultimately resulted in the Boxer Rebellion and the Taiping Rebellion, in which twenty million people died. Majority were Christians.⁷

Towards the end of the 19th century, Christianity was introduced into Burma as well. The tribes known as the Karens were the oppressed and the suppressed communities in that country at that time. They corresponded to the Harijans of India. The response to Christianity from the Buddhist Burmese was very poor. The Christian missionaries converted more than 80% of the Karens (aborigines of Burma) to Christianity. They were given schools, hospitals, new houses, economic aid and other welfare measures in support. Even though they became Christians, the majority retained much of their ancestral beliefs and practices. There was no religious conversion through faith. By 1920, the more literate among the Karens were put through the seminary at Insein (a township north of Rangoon) and later sent out to reform the tribes. It was a partial success. By 1930, a small band of educated Karens had come up. They groomed the entire lot to accept and adopt Western culture, religion and ways of life. They built up a local militia known as the Karen Irregulars. These were given military training and

used to serve as additional flank support to the British forces of occupation in the country. The Karen Irregulars were more or less on the same footing as the Auxiliary Force of India which consisted of Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmese. During the turbulent years between 1924 and 1940 in Burma, when the nationalist upsurge took place, the Karen Irregulars faithfully discharged their duties and obligations as subjects of the white man, by supporting the British and betraying their own country. When Burma became independent, the Karens were expelled and driven out of the lower Burma regions. They took refuge in the northern triangle. They are now collaborating with the Kachins and the Chinese to help the Naga rebels to go to China for training and for their safe return through the Burma border, before re-entering India.⁸

There was some talk of the British giving Dominion Status to Burma and installing the Karens in power. It did not, however, turn out that way. The Karens are today in the wilderness serving as the errand boys of the Chinese, the Kachins and the Nagas. This is a typical example of the way Christianity and the Church has been used to bolster up the colonial empires of the West in Asian countries. The standard method has always been to exploit the social inequality and injustice in Asian countries, and then split them into hostile groups and support the one against the other in the name of the Church.

The Czarist regime in Russia was a tyranny fully supported by the Greek Orthodox Church. In March 1959, Bishop Rajah Manikkam met the then Chinese premier Chou-en-Lai in Peking and wanted religious freedom for the Christians to be restored and ties to be renewed with the World Council of Churches. He was told in clear terms: "Surely it cannot be on the basis of Ecclesiastical

Colonialism". It was further made clear that China had to expel all foreign missionaries who were at heart colonialists and agents of foreign powers and did great harm to China. Chou-en-Lai also pointed out that in China there was complete religious freedom to every citizen, only subject to the condition that he realized that his religion was his personal and private affair and that he could not and should not try to make an impact of it on his neighbour. No one in the country, he said, was allowed to bring religion into politics. When Bishop Rajah Manikkam further questioned him about the Christian leaders imprisoned in China, he was told: "It is simple, because they have tried to overthrow our Government under the instigation of our enemies, and no Government worth its name can allow that." Later, Bishop Raja Manikkam wrote to the editor of the *China Bulletin*, New York, saying: "In my opinion nothing is harming our relationship with our Chinese brethren as much as the circular letters about China written by Americans, particularly ex-Chinese missionaries, now at Hongkong. The same story is now being re-enacted in the Northeastern tribal territories of Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal. It is a war declared by the soldiers of the American Baptist Mission on the Hindu Government of India. The Americans and the British are reported to have told the tribals that they were not Indians because they were Christians."⁹

The havoc which the foreign missionaries of the American Baptist Mission Church played in the Northeastern tribal territories, Nagaland and Mizoram, deserves special mention. During the years 1840 to 1920, the then British Government took a lot of trouble to subdue the tribals in these areas. There were many expeditions and many casualties on both sides. It may be

said that by 1900 the British were fairly successful in bringing these territories under their control for all practical purposes. The Christina missions then started their conversion work. It paid them rich dividends. The then British Government gave the missionaries its full support. English education was introduced and with that the Western mode of life. When the Second World War started in the year 1939, there were 90% Christians in some areas and in others about 50 to 60%. Right from the beginning they were indoctrinated with the theory that they were not Indians because they were christians and also that being a Mongoloid race, and the Indians being non-Mongoloid, they certainly couldn't be Indians.

The 1963, one Rev. Scott offered to negotiate with the rebel Nagas and bring about an understanding and then settle the disputes amicably. The Government of India accepted the offer. It was then found that right from the start he was actively engaged in instigating them to further intensify the fight. The first advice he gave to the rebels was to stand firm on the principle that "the Nagas were not Indians because they were Christians." He was pulled out and thrown out of the country. The short-sighted politicians in Delhi were slowly beginning to see the enormous danger involved in tolerating foreign Christian missionary activity in the country.¹⁰

During the last six months and more, some strange things are happening in the coastal region of Tamil Nadu. The Christian evangelists are carrying on a vigorous propaganda among the Christians, particularly the fishermen communities along the sea coast and the slum areas in the cities, telling them in plain language that a landing of the American Marine Commandos on the Indian coast is imminent. The gist of their thesis is: "You are

the rejects of Indian society. You are slaves. The Americans are our friends; they are not only willing but also anxious to liberate you. That will make you enjoy all fundamental human rights enshrined in the U.N. Charter. So the church has formulated what is known as 'Liberation Theology' and hence this preaching. All of you should now try to concentrate in camps and areas not far from the coast and within reasonable distance of seaports wherever possible. An American landing of troops here is possible any time. They will liberate you and thereafter it will be the kingdom of God for you." A lot more of pro-American propaganda is going on in the name of Christianity. It is all very cleverly worded. In substance it is a direct incitement to rebellion. American help is taken for granted. Communal riots are flaring up. All this has given rise to the opinion in the minds of the public that the Christians are getting organised as the fifth-column for USA and the Muslims are getting organised as the fifth-column for Pakistan. How far police intelligence is aware of all these happenings and if so what action they would take, remains to be seen.¹¹

The stage is now set for a military solution in Mizoram, where all negotiations have failed. During the last World War there was a sarcastic remark against Winston Churchill saying that he was absolutely determined to fight the Germans to the last Frenchman and the last Russian. A parallel situation exists in Mizoram today. The tribals are made the scapegoats for fighting the indirect war of the Anglo-American group.

In 1924, an American missionary, Dr. Stanley Jones, toured this country extensively preaching Christianity. Hindus asked him a simple question: "We Hindus are wedded to religious tolerance. We approach the Christians with goodwill and sympathy. We have in our country,

Hindus, Parsis, Buddhists, Arya Samajists, Brahmos, Theosophists, Vaishnavites, Saivaites, Sikhs, etc. We get along amicably and take part in each other's celebrations, festivals and congregational worship. As Indians we have a common base. Why is it that Christians alone adopt an attitude of exclusiveness and hostility and refuse to have a common base with us?" Dr. Stanley Jones said: "I understand your question very well. You are trying to sell me your idea of the syncretical method. With this syncretical method you destroyed Buddhism in the land of its birth. With this same method you blunted the sword of Islam. If I should accept your proposition then it is only a question of time before the Indian Christian community will become christianised members of the Hindu society. This is a catastrophe that we are determined to prevent." The emphasis is on the negative aspect. There is a saying in the Bible: "He who is not with me scattereth abroad." (*Matthew*, 12.30)

The motivation for Christian evangelism is simple. Disrupt and destroy. The missions make no secret of it. It is a mistake to think that Christian missionary enterprise is a religious movement. The Christians themselves never claimed it to be a religious movement. It was a declaration of war and an attack on the religious and cultural setup of the people of Asia and Africa, and it was always politically motivated.

Traditional religion has collapsed in Christendom, which is no more Christian. This is a post-war phenomenon. The divorce of the Church and State relationship, the old pattern, is now complete. But it has now emerged in a different form. The old theology based on untenable doctrines and dogmas has been totally discarded by the industrialized West with its new religion of scientific

technology. The Church, therefore, is undergoing a process known to social scientists as politicization. The term does not mean merely political activity. By politicization of religion is meant the internal transformation of the faith itself so that it comes to be defined in terms of political values. This has resulted in the entry of the State into areas which were formerly the traditional preserve of the churches. That means, the Church-State relationship has been reinstated in a new form. The Church is today a tool for organizing political action as decided and directed by the State. There is a clear distinction between the involvement of religion with politics and the reinterpretation of religious values as political values. This is the politicization that is happening in the modern Church. If the Church does not agree then the justification for its existence just disappears. Christians as a religious body do not exist today in the Western world in a meaningful way. But Christian evangelism is still reaping a harvest in the Third World. Thus the political consciousness of Christianity in the developing world actually originated within the politicized churches of the old world. The Christian religion has lost the power and the confidence to define its areas of influence and jurisdiction even on questions of social morality. In their death agonies, the churches are distributing the causes of their own sickness—the politicization of religion of the churches in the developing world in Asia and Africa. This can be a fatal inheritance in the Eastern countries where religion is no yet so dead.¹³

Liberation Theology

This is the post-war model of Christian religion. The Christian missions now claim that it has become their duty

to liberate the oppressed and the suppressed all over the world. This movement works through the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Christian Council, etc. These organisations work under the direction and control of the governments of the Western superpowers. The USA, Canada, Britain, and Australia are in the forefront. USSR and China also seem to have a finger in the pie on their own terms. The Anglo-American group is keen to liberate India, Afghanistan, Laos, Kampuchea, Viet-Nam, Thailand, Cuba, Iran, etc. According to them, Tibet, South Korea, South Africa, Rhodesia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Diego Garcia etc. do not come into this scheme. Countries in the Soviet zone of influence feel that these countries like Tibet, Salvador, South Korea etc. have to be urgently liberated from the “tyranny of the Imperialists” and the “Reactionaries.” Leftist groups have also been making lot of noise about the need for drastic action to be taken to eliminate Racism from Africa.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that many of the high-ranking dignitaries of the Church, occupying key positions in these World Councils and the international missionary organizations, happen to be all war veterans of World War II vintage. These Patriarchs installed as the heads of the Church hierarchy are talking in the language of exporting revolution to other countries. These Christian organizations, when making serious inroads into politics, use some special type of technical phraseology to make everything euphemistic. In the concept of Liberation Theology are also included the concepts of internal disruption, use of violence, civil disobedience, organizing resistance movements, etc.¹⁵

While the programme continues and even expands it is worth noting that most of the money disbursed through these special funds has come not from traditional donors,

but from new ones, mostly governments. This governmental element worries some critics within the organizations who see in it some dangerous portents. It is breach of the Church and State relationship brought about not necessarily by philosophical arguments, but by pragmatic ones involving a political approach. Another serious implication is that some governments will be consciously aiding subversion in some other country. In 1925, in a conference at Stockholm sponsored by Life & Work and the Faith & Other Movements they postulated the slogan "Doctrine divides: Service Unites." These critics or the dissenters now feel that this slogan has now been reversed to read "Doctrine unites; Service divides." The ethical philosophy of Jesus is dead, and a political philosophy of violence has now taken its place. The developed countries are now making a serious effort to subvert and overthrow the governments established by law in the developing countries, using the churches as their tools.¹⁶

John Foster Dulles has published a book, *War or Peace* in 1957 (Macmillan, N. York). In the chapter 'Policies in Asia' he writes: "In the past the United State policy in the east rested on the foundations of friendly relations with China. Our people, through Government, missionaries, doctors and educators, have shared and built Chinese friendship for more than a century. Out of it have come such political doctrines as the 'Hay doctrine 'Hay doctrine of the open door' in China, the 'Hughes doctrine of territorial integrity.' Out of it have also come Boxer Fund scholarships, Christian Colleges in China, and Christian medical centres, including a Rockefeller Foundation development at Peking."¹⁷ Here Mr. Dulles is making a clear-cut statement that the USA has been using the

Church and the mission organizations and institutions to build up its close relations with China. The Church in China is no more under the tutelage of the USA. Similar changes are coming up in other areas also.

Sixty years ago Christianity was at loggerheads with Communism. But today Liberation Theology is working in the grooves of Marxism. This has produced a most anomalous situation for the World Council of Churches, which is very much dependent on the Anglo-Americans for its finances. They have to apply this ideology to support the political ambitions of the capitalist West which has used and still continues to use the Church as a tool. The Church is only too willing to co-operate.

In the meanwhile, Christianity has become a danger and a threat to the safety, security and freedom of India. It is not yet too late. But it will brook no further delay. It is time that the Government and the people of this country tackle this problem with all the energy and resources at their command.

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II

“Liberal” Christianity

Ram Swarup

The practice of Christianity may make a man better in some respects but it does little to widen his sympathies and to open up his heart to larger spiritual wealth of different peoples and cultures. This is also true of Islam, another revealed religion, but in the present discussion we shall restrict ourselves to Christianity alone.

From its early days, Christianity has claimed a monopoly of things divine. It has held that there is no salvation outside of the Church. But the world has considerably changed during the last two hundred years. A wave of rationalism and humanism has reached the shores of Europe. This has made Christian theology with its exclusive claims look pretentious. This has also fostered a new spirit of liberalism and universalism and also a new awareness of a wider human family, including within itself members who are neither European nor Christian and yet are rich in the things of the spirit.

This new intellectual ferment has not left the Christian theologians entirely untouched. In the past, they saw in religions other than their own nothing but the hand of the Devil and it cost them little pang of conscience to send

even the best and wisest of the men of these religions to Hell. But in the new intellectual and humanist climate, this will not do. The Christian Devil and Hell have lost their terror; their old monopolistic claims have also become laughable. In the new context, if they are to be heard at all, they must appear somewhat more modest, and must not appear to reject altogether or too summarily religions other than their own.

So under the changed conditions there is a new theology under construction. This does not regard other religions as the handwork of the Devil. On the contrary, it says that there is a *natural* religious impulse which has been at work throughout history and throughout the world giving birth to *natural* religions having their own validity. But, it further adds that this impulse, so necessary at a particular stage, finds its culmination and fulfillment in the *revealed* religion of Christianity. Other religions are *preparatory* to Christianity.

There is also another problem that the new theologians face, the problem of finding a place in their scheme for non-Christian saints and good men. True, they cannot yet be sent to Heaven—Christian theology precludes that—but they cannot also be so unceremoniously sent to Hell as in the good old days. The new intellectual climate does not countenance it.

So some theologians, liberal and ingenious, have been at work trying to find a solution. One of them was the late Cardinal Jean Danielou. In his *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*, he observes that even the Bible mentions saints who are not biblical. Abel, Seth, Henoah, Daniel, Noe, Job, Melchisedec, Lot, the Queen of Sheba are examples of non-Christian and even non-biblical saints mentioned in the Bible. Abel was anterior to Abraham; and so were

Henoch and Noe. Lot was a relative of Abraham but was not a party to the God's Covenant. Daniel was a Phoenician and Job an Idumean; the Queen of Sheba was a non-Jewish princess.

All these examples show that some sort of saintliness or holiness is possible outside the Christian fold though, according to the Cardinal, that holiness by its very nature "must always be inferior to Christian holiness." But "nonetheless, the fact remains that holiness of that sort is possible".

This does not seem to say much or concede much, but considering that it comes from a Christian theologian trained to see Devil in everything connected with non-Christians, it is a great deal. Danielou goes on and makes a further concession. He admits that "there are men who did not know Christ either because they lived before Him or because knowledge of Him did not come their way (presumably because a Christian missionary had not reached their locality), and yet were saved; and some of these too were saints." But that is all. For he hastens to add that "they were not saved by the religions to which they belonged; for Buddha does not save, Zoroaster does not save, nor does Mohomed. If they were saved, then it is because they were saved by Christ Who alone saves, Who alone sanctifies. Again, if they were saved, it is because they already belonged to the Church for there is no salvation outside the Church."

II

The new theology will not go as far as to say that the holy men of other religions are damned, though it knows that they are not saved except through the Church.

These holy men are not saved partly because their holiness is not holy enough. There are three levels of

holiness, the pagan holiness being the lowest, governed as it is merely by the law of conscience and not by God's own revealed Laws. Danielou tells us that God's will is "expressed on the Christian plane by the law of the Gospel, on the Jewish plane by the Mosaic law, on the cosmic plane by the law of conscience," the last being obviously an inferior agency of holiness corresponding to the inferior religion of the pagan which is merely *natural*, merely *cosmic*. According to Danielou, at the lowest level, which is the pagan level, "holiness within the sphere of cosmic religion consists in a response to the call of God made known by conscience". At a more advanced stage, God makes His will known through a Revelation to Moses. Finally, God comes down into the world in a human form as Jesus Christ completing His Revelation. Hence the three degrees of holiness and three orders of holy men. "The glory which shines from the face of Jesus Christ overshadows, as St. Paul tells us, that which shone from the face of Moses. In like manner, the glory shining from the face of Moses overshadows that which shone from the face of Noe."

Man's religion, like holiness, has progressed from the natural or cosmic to the Jewish, to the Christian. "All Christian liturgy—Easter, Pentecost, Christmas—have at the back of their Christian significance, a Jewish significance; and behind the latter there is a cosmic significance."

This three-level development is evident in all spheres and aspects touching on religious life. For example, there is a three-level development in the mode of worship. On the lowest level, the pagan level, there is a cosmic temple. The house of God is the whole Cosmos, heaven His tent, and the earth His footstool. In the Old Testament, this primitive atmosphere still lingers. Abraham has that

parrhesia with God—that freedom of speech which in ancient Greece was the right of free citizens.

This gave way to the Temple of Moses. The establishment of the Tabernacle, whose ultimate form is the Temple, is the fundamental mission entrusted by God to Moses. The Covenant was Abraham's mission, the Temple that of Moses. Uptil then, God was everywhere but from the time of Moses till the death of Christ, when a still higher stage begins, the Temple is the dwelling in which the glory of Yahweh abides. Upto the time of Moses, sacrifices could be offered to God anywhere. But after that only those sacrifices were pleasing to God that were offered in the Tabernacle. "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree." (Bible, Deuteronomy 12.2)

In a divine plan, we are assured by Cardinal Danielou, this was a necessary stage, for the great danger was polytheism; the singleness of the sanctuary was, as it were, the sign of the Oneness of God.

Thus a second great step is taken. The religion of Sinai creates a gulf between God and man. No longer does Yahweh talk on easy terms with the patriarchs. Henceforth, He dwells in the secrecy of the Holy of Holies. Separating man from God marks an advance, for it draws attention to two things: first, to God's transcendence. His incomprehensibility, that He is wholly Other; no easy-going anthropomorphism any longer; second, to man's sinfulness, his essentially fallen nature. Without this, the next and third step was not possible.

In the next stage, the abode of Yahweh is no longer the Temple, but the Manhood of Jesus. "The glory of the lord dwelt in the Temple until the coming of the incarnation.

But from that day it began to dwell in Jesus. The divine presence is no longer to be found in an enclosure of stone, it dwells in Jesus Himself. With Him the Mosaic order comes to an end.” There is a qualitative leap, as the Marxists would love to call it, for Jesus is not just “a higher kind of Moses. Moses and the Temple are figures but Jesus is the reality.

From this to the Temple of the Church was a most natural and easy step. In fact, it was no new step at all. It is a mode of saying the same thing. “It is the manhood of Jesus that is the Temple of the New Law, but this Manhood must be taken as a whole, that is to say, it is the Mystical body in its entirety; this is the complete and final Temple. The dwelling of God is this Christian community whose Head is in the Heaven.” God now resides in the Church.

There are other variations but the above is the essential theme of the new liberal theologians. For example, there is Henry de Lubac, the author of *Catholicism; A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (Pubsihers; Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London, 1950). In this book, he says; “Outside Christianity humanity can doubtless be raised in an exceptional manner to certain spiritual heights, but the topmost summit is never reached, and there is the risk of being the farther off from it by mistaking for it some other outlying peak. There is some essential factor missing from every religious ‘invention’ that is not a following of Christ. There is something lacking, for example, in Buddhist charity; it is not Christian charity. Something is lacking in the spirituality of great Hindu mystics; it is not the spirituality of St. John of the Cross. Outside Christianity nothing attains its end towards which, unknowingly, all human desires, all human endeavours, are in movement: the embrace of God in Christ.”

If this is true, then his conclusion is a fair one: "So long as the Church does not extend and penetrate to the whole humanity, so as to give it the form of Christ. She cannot rest."

F.H. Hilard in his *Man in Eastern Religions* finds that to the question what is man, the Christian answer is the best. According to Christians "man is to be understood as primarily a person and not a mere manifestation." In this view man is "an individual," while the others, "Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, agree in thinking of man primarily as an aspect of ultimate Reality."

Nicolas Berdyaev, in his *Spirit and Reality* (Publishers: Geoffery Bles, Centenary Press, London, 1939) says: "Theosis makes man Divine, while at the same time preserving his human nature. Thus instead of human personality being annihilated, it is made in the image of God and the Divine Trinity. The mystery of the personality is intimately related to that of freedom and love. Love and charity can flourish only if there are personal relationships. Monistic identity excludes love as well as freedom. Man is not identical with the cosmos and with God; man is a microcosm and microtheosis."

Again, he says: "In Hindu and Platonic mysticism everything is diametrically opposed to the dialogical and dramatic relationship between man and God, between one personality and another. Spirituality is interpreted as being opposed to personality and, therefore, as independent of love, human freedom and a relation between the plural and the one. The mystical way is that of Gnosis rather than that of Eros." According to him, Hindu spirituality "is an austere and unloving mysticism. The absence of love is explained by the fact that this mysticism is unconscious of personality; it is concerned with abdicating rather than preserving the personality."

Evelyn Underhill, the well-known author of *Mysticism* (Publishers: Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, Reprint 1952), too seems to share this scheme. She Says: "In Christianity, the natural mysticism which like natural religion is latent in humanity, and at a certain point of development breaks out in every race, came to itself; and attributing for the first time true and distinct personality to its object, brought into focus the confused and unconditioned God which Neoplatonism had constructed from the abstract concepts of philosophy blended with the intuitions of Indian ecstasies, and made the basis of the meditations on the Real."

She repeats similar sentiments at another place. After making the statement that a mystic is "willing to use the map of the community in which he finds himself," which means that mystical experience is compatible with different theologies about it, she continues to add that "we are bound to allow as a historical fact that mysticism, so far, has found its best map in Christianity," and that "the Christian atmosphere is the one in which the individual mystic has most often been able to develop his genius in a sane and fruitful way."

III

In India, too, there is a group of Christian theologians working in the direction of liberalism. These theologians have become noticeable after India's independence. While Christian money and missions continue to work by and large in their old style (see the *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee*, Madhya Pradesh), there is a group of Christian theologians who want an encounter with Hinduism on a different plane.

Here their greatest difficulty is the rival slogan that is fashionable among Hindu intellectuals that all teachers

preach more or less the same things and that different religions are just different paths to the same goal. The problem of these new liberal Christian theologians is how to salvage their religion from this demolishing, equalizing slogan. So they preach that every religion is unique and that we should all meet in our individual richness in a fruitful dialogue. While secretly hoping that this dialogue would prove that they are unique in a superior way they invite us all to this encounter. And this should be welcome.

Some of them have taken Hindu names, live in Indian style and have put on Indian dress. Some of them have even donned the habits of Hindu Sanyasins. The motives are mixed. Some may be following St. Paul's practice "to become all things to all men, by all means to win over some of them" (1 Cor. 9.22); others because they find this style more informal and under Indian conditions more comfortable; still others, as they argue, in order to understand and enter into the Hindu psyche better. For some it may be no more than a change of tactics and fronts, but there are genuine elements too. They simply don't have the heart to send a whole people to eternal perdition which their orthodox theology demands.

The late Dr. Jacques-Albert Cuttat, the Swiss Ambassador to India in the 1950s, poses the problem and invites us to this dialogue. He says in his *The Spiritual Dialogue of East and West* (Max Muller Bhavan Publication): "The West inclines to exclusivism, the East to syncretism. The view that salvation is only possible within the visible church—a view expressly rejected by the Catholic Church—has been sustained by missionaries and eminent theologians even today; such blindness for the spiritual riches of the East, for its mystical depth and intuition of the transience of the cosmos to higher Realities, such blindness always implies a blindness for some basic aspects

of Christianity itself. The East is tempted by the opposite extreme, syncretism; it consists in wrongly equating biblical values with Eastern religious categories. Such universalism is undoubtedly more tolerant, less violent than Western Exclusivism, but equally blind to the specific inner visage of Christianity and other biblical spiritualities.” Dr. Cuttat teaches that each religion is unique and different religions should meet and encounter each other in their individual uniqueness. He is a philosopher of *uniqueness, encounter, dialogue, and exchange*.

Another eminent name which has to be mentioned in this connection is that of the late Fr. J. Monchanin. He was attached to India and settled in Tiruchirapalli. He built for himself a retreat to which he gave the name Sachidananda Ashram. He himself assumed the name Swami Param Arubi Anandam and put on the dress of an Indian Sanyasin. From these facts one should not assume that he became a Hindu monk. He understood his own mission differently. As the editors of his papers said when he died in 1957 his “mission here was not so much to become fully an Indian or to realize in himself the final synthesis of West and East as to bring to India in a pure form, yet with a remarkable sympathy and understanding, the riches of a Christian soul.” He himself defines his mission in these terms: “I have come to India for no other purpose than to awaken in a few souls the desire (the passion) to raise up a Christian India. I think the problem is of the same magnitude as the Christianization, in former times, of Greece (the Hellenization of Christendom modelled on the form of Greek sensibility, thought and spiritual experience). It will take centuries, sacrificed lives, and we shall perhaps die before seeing any realizations. A Christian India, completely Indian and completely Christian will be

something so wonderful; to prepare it from afar, the sacrifice of our lives is not too much to ask."

Just two years before his death in 1957, he was writing: "I believe more in 'exchange'. India must give the West a keener sense of eternal of the primacy of Being over Becoming, and receive, in turn, from the West a mere concrete sense of the person, of love (of which India alas! knows so little)."

Fr. J. Monchann found a good deal in Hinduism which he appreciated. But let us see what all this 'appreciation' amounts to. All the merit Hinduism has accumulated is only a pointer to her conversion to Christianity. We give in his own language what he says on the subject :

"India has received from the Almighty an uncommon gift, an unquenchable thirst for whatever is spiritual. From the Vedic and Upanishadic times, a countless host of her sons have been great seekers of God. Centuries after centuries there arose seers and poets, singing the joys and sorrows of a soul in quest of the One, philosophers reminding every man of the supremacy of contemplation: upward and inward movements through knowledge to the ultimate.

"Communion with Him and liberation from whatever hinders that realization, was for them the unique goal.

"Hundreds and thousands of men and women have consecrated themselves entirely to that end... We may rightly think that such a marvellous seed was not planted in vain by God in the Indian should. Unfortunately, Indian wisdom is tainted with erroneous tendencies and looks as if it has not yet found its own equilibrium. So was Greek wisdom before Greece humbly received the paschal message of the Risen Christ. Man, outside the unique revelation and the unique Church, is always and

everywhere unable to sift truth from falsehood, good from evil.

“But once Christianized, Greece rejected her ancestral errors; so also, confident in the indefectible guidance of the Church, we hope that India, once baptized to the fullness of her body and soul, will reject her pantheistic tendencies and, discovering in the splendours of the Holy Ghost the true mysticism....

“Is not the message she had to deliver to the world similar to the message of the ancient Greece? Therefore the Christianization of Indian civilization is to all intents and purposes an historical undertaking comparable to the Christianization of Greece.”

Hindus may have the necessary underlying spiritual qualities like a sense of the holy in abundance, but the Church has the Truth in its possession. Therefore, “India has to receive humbly from the Church the sound and basic principles of true contemplation. The genuine Christian contemplation is built on the unshakable foundation of revealed truths concerning God and men and their mutual relations.” The mystic East should be led by the doctors of theology of the West, the forest-sages by the university men.

On another occasion, he says: “In that mystery, Hinduism (and specially *Advait*) must die to rise up again Christian. Any theory which does not fully take into account this necessity constitutes a lack of loyalty both to Christianity—which we cannot mutilate from its essence—and to Hinduism—from which we cannot hide its fundamental error and its essential divergence from Christianity.

“Meanwhile, our task is to keep all doors open, to wait with patience and theological hope for the hour of the

advent of India into the Church in order to realize the fullness of the Church and the fullness of India. In this age-long vigil, let us remember that love can enter where intellect must bide at the door."

He hopes that "India cannot be alien to this process of assimilation by Christianity and transformation into it." But "should India fail in that task, we cannot understand, humanly speaking, how the mystical body of Christ could reach its quantitative and qualitative fullness in His eschatological Advent."

IV

The discussion will gain in fullness if we referred to two colloquia organised by Christian theologians of this approach. These were held at the invitation of Dr. Cuttat who attended them both personally. The first one was held at Almora in April 1961; the second one at Rajpura, Dehradun, in the same month next year. A general and sympathetic account of the second one is given by Bede Griffiths in his *Christ in India: Essays Towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (Publishers: Charles Scribner's Sons, New York). We ourselves shall discuss here only the first colloquy at Almora. It was attended by individuals connected with various Christian institutions, Catholic and Protestant, like Asirvanam, Kenkeri; Snehasadan, Poona; Santi Bhavan, Calcutta; Vrindavan, Kottagiri; Jyotiniketan, Kareli. One Hindu, Shri Viveka Dutta, was also present at the discussion for the first few sessions. The summary of the papers and discussion was prepared by Fr. J. Britto C.M.I., of Dharmaram College, Bangalore, himself one of the participants. The summary is titled *Indian Interiority and Christian Theology*.

All the participants in this colloquy advocate a dialogue with Hindu India on a deeper level. But let us see what kind of mind they bring to the proposed dialogue.

As the *Indian Interiority and Christian Theology* tells us, the participants start with the assumption that “Christianity as the one revealed religion for all men, cannot be lacking in any truth necessary for the salvation of man; it has the guarantee of the Divine testimony.”

But their procedure is not to be to denounce Hinduism forthright; on the other hand, it is to take different categories of Hindu thinking and “after exhausting all the positive points that Hinduism provides as solutions, proceed to show that Christianity gives fuller and ultimate solution to those and all other problems.”

The intention is also not to inquire whether “Hinduism has some positive religious values which are wanting in Christianity”; for that is “not logically tenable” believing as they do that Christianity is “the true revealed religion for all humanity.” But they are prepared to look at particular values more intensely realized by some Hindu sages which may direct “the Christian back to his own religion, in which he finds the same values more naturally embedded.” This position is not without its modesty. It seems that Christians, if not Christianity, too can learn a few things even from the heathens, though these things are nothing but the neglected truths of their own religion.

But the participants soon forget the learning part and assume the teaching role, probably due to compulsion of habit. They become polemical. According to the procedure they laid down for themselves, they take different Hindu categories of thought and spirit and show that Christianity offers a better answer. One such category is Teacher-Disciple or *Guru-Shishya* relationship, an important spiritual institution in Hinduism. After

discussing it, the participants find that "the only person in whom the positive values of the Hindu Guru are best verified is Christ."

Similarly, after discussing the Hindu concept of history, the colloquy finds that the positive values found "in the Indian view of history have their full meaning and natural setting in the Christian concept of history."

The participants discuss Yoga too, its positive as well as its negative aspects. At the end, they find that while in Christianity the negative aspects are avoided, the positive aspects of Hindu Yoga "find their natural setting and full meaning in Christianity. Non-dualism, and dualism, Yoga absolutism and Bhakti personalism, Sankara and Ramanuja are in different ways related to Christianity. The Christian worships the Absolute of Sankara with the devotion of Ramanuja."

The Hindu concept of Avatarhood is discussed. It is found inferior to the Christian one. "Christ's incarnation is a unique fact, and not repeated in every age..... He is true Godhead in true humanity."

Hindu symbolism and idol worship have some positive points but the dangers are far greater. "The fundamental defect of Hindu idol-worship is that it is purely a human attempt so to say to trans-substantiate the material things into the divine without a prior incarnation, namely, without a divine guarantee which assumes the human symbol, into the divine economy of self-communication to man. Man cannot by his own powers raise himself to the divine level, which far transcends him. Hence the Hindu conviction that when the priest recites the prayers over the idol it becomes inhabited by the deity is gratuitous assumption and hence superstitious."

But it is different with Christian symbolism. For example, "the Eucharist marks the culmination of human

symbolism. In it the food of man is turned into the body and blood of God. There man's attempt to transubstantiate the material world into the divine is wonderfully realized—the Eucharist may be taken as a summary and completion of all human endeavour to grasp the divine Reality in human symbols. Hence it should form the converging point of all religious cult.”

Hindu Bhakti too has more demerits than merits. Its chief defects are that (1) “the notion of love itself is not perfect,” (2) “there is no integration between knowledge and love,”—one has to choose between them; and (3) it lacks a “perfect concept of alterity and there is no proper concept of sin.”

Nevertheless, the Bhakti of a Hindu could still be a “preparation for the final confrontation with the personal God who manifests Himself in the Christian Revelation.”

Discussing *jnanamarga*, the colloquy finds that the Hindu doctrine of Advaita is irreconcilable with the Christian doctrine of Trinity, but even that could become a step to the understanding of the doctrine of the three Persons in One. How ? First, by opposing polytheism. Second, by its strong metaphysical bias for unity: “Only against the background of the unique and absolute Reality of God can the doctrine of the Trinity and the immortal personality of man be properly understood. God in his providence insisted on the strictest monotheism, and uncompromisingly exterminated all tendency to polytheism, in the chosen people in the Old Testament, before revealing against the background of the monotheism the Trinity of Persons in that one God, in the New Testament. Hence Advaita with its strong metaphysical basis can be a proper *preparatio evangelica* for an understanding of the Christian message.”

V

Once it is admitted that Christianity is the uniquely true religion, the summit towards which all religions are advancing, the liberal theologians will not mind conceding certain subordinate spiritual qualities and attributes and values to Hinduism. In this expansive mood, they generously admit that some European Christians “have felt the wealth of India’s religious past”. The deep interiority which India has inculcated has even “led some of them to deepen their own Christian interiority”. Some of them have been “struck by the vision of the spirit of poverty preached by Christ (but) so fully and cheerfully practised by millions in India.” The religious outlook in which everything of every event is looked upon as a work of God, a manifestation of the divine, has impressed many. Many have noted with admiration “the so to say national aptitude for deep prayer and the contemplation of divine things which Indians manifest.”

When the pope came to India in 1964, he “praised” India’s deep spirituality. But it is in the light of the above approach that this praise should be understood. It was not anything spontaneous or genuine. It was diplomatic and deceptive. In fact, it amounted to cheating, if cheating includes a double-tongued approach, half-truths spoken and full aim unstated. The Pope’s “praise” concealed more than it revealed. It meant to say: Hinduism is very good. It is a useful preparation for Christianity. The Pope praised Hinduism for its *secondaries* hiding a condemnation of its *primaries*.

His deputy in India, Cardinal Gracias, could afford to be more candid in putting forth the unstated aim. He bemoaned: “It is a matter of grave concern for us that hardly three percent of the local population in India could

so far be drawn to receive the Grace of Christ over the last several centuries.” The strategy may change but the aim remains fixed. It may be a soft-spoken approach now, but the goal is unaltered. Liberal Christianity is like Euro-Communism: the tactics and the slogans have changed but the mind remains the same.

In the past, in the heydays of British imperialism, fanatic Christians like Carey and Wilberforce were telling their people something like this: “The natives live in the sin and superstition and darkness of paganism. Surely God has not granted us their charge for nothing. He wants us to bring them to the light of the Gospel, to convert them to Christianity.” But it seems the rulers were less convinced about the benefits of Christianity to the natives. But in a Christian country, they could not express this feeling or belief too openly. So they took to a more equivocal course. They pretended to agree with the crusaders but counter-argued thus: “You are very correct in your judgement of the natives. But precisely because they are superstitious, we must go slow with them and their religious beliefs; if we touch their religion, it would become a law and order problem and we may lose the Empire itself.” This attitude of the British rulers saved India from the worst ravages of Christian missionaries.

But now the political equation has changed and also the ideas have changed. What was possible a hundred years ago is no longer possible now. The Church is also less powerful now even in countries nominally Christian. Its pretentious claims jar on the more sophisticated ears and minds of the age. So a new liberal—or at least liberal-sounding—theology is in the offing, which is trying to give up the old method of forth-right denunciation and taking the new method of partial praise, a grudging (and

sometimes even genuine) appreciation of the values of a religion they aim to supplant.

Behind the praise of the neo-theologians, we can hear, if our ears are attentive, another message expressed sometimes openly, sometimes *sotto voce*. They are saying something like this: "You are too good to remain what you are. Your destiny is to become Christians. We see in your country spiritual things deep and uncommon. But God could not have planted these things amongst you in vain. He must have been preparing you for Christianity, for blessing you with the truth he blessed us with; in short, he must have been aiming to make you as good as we are."

The neo-theologians admit that the Hindus have lived a life of dedication and constant quest, that they have pondered over things spiritual from times immemorial. But, in spite of that, somehow, the *Truth* eluded them. Why? Because, as they seem to say, while the Hindus had the seeking, they lacked the key. They did not know Jesus Christ. God has to be found not in God but in Jesus Christ and the Church.

The Bible says: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. But to the Christian theologians, seeking and knocking, however dedicated and sincere, are not enough. For don't we meet the strange phenomenon that while the Hindus asked, as the neo-theologians are ready to grant, God save it to the Christians; while the Hindus sought, the Christians found; while the Hindus knocked, it was opened unto the Christians. A mystery, perhaps a trinitarian mystery, perplexing to the heathens but easily understood by the Christians.

The Christian theologians call pagan religions *natural*, while their own they call *revealed*. In this they pay to pagans

an unintended compliment. The opposite of the *natural* is not the revealed, but the *artificial*, and there is something artificial about the Christian theology. A natural religion means that it is about the things inherent and intrinsic; that is about a seeking of the heart which is innate; it is about *man* in his deeper search, and not about a particular person or a church; that is does not deal with the accidental but with the universal. Its truths are not adventitious, added from *outside* by a *sole* leader or institution; on the contrary, these reside in the “cave of the heart”, to put it in the Upanishadic phrase. These truths are also not fortuitous, happening by a lucky chance consisting in the appearance of a particular individual, or in the crusading labours of a church burdened with a self-assumed role. On the contrary, these truths happen because man in his innermost being, by *nature*, is a child of divine light. Man grows from *within*, by an inherent law of his being, responding to *That* which he already is secretly. The *purusha* or *person* within responds to the *purusha* without. *Tat tvam asi; tat aham asmi; sah tadasti*. (You are That; I am That; he is That.)

Christianity has two pillars: a narrow piety and a word-juggling theology. What is true in it is also found in other religions which it supplanted in the past and which it continues to do in the present as well; what it claims to be unique to it is merely intellectual bluff.

Christian theology, as it has developed, is not a product of a tranquil and purified heart; rather, it derives from a mind prejudiced, self-centred and self-righteous, a mind contentious and cantankerous, out to prove the other fellow in the wrong. It is an artificial mental construct with very little spirituality in it. Above all, like Islam, it is inwoven with bigotry and fanaticism and lacks charity, understanding and the deeper vision of the spirit.

III

Genesis and History of the Politics of Conversion

Sita Ram Goel

While Mao-tse Tung was licking his wounds after the long march to his hideout in Yen-an, an American journalist asked him the following question: "A lot of people in the USA have been led to believe by our liberals that you people are not communists, but only agrarian reformers. What do you have to say on that subject?" Mao-tse Tung smiled mischievously and said: "So long as the belief helps the revolution, we do not care what the sons-of-bitches believe about us."

The Christian missionary and the muslim *Mulla* in India can comfortably express the same sentiment about the Hindus who have been led to believe that Christianity and Islam are religions towards which Hindu society should practice the *samabhava* (sentiment of equal honour) as the various sects of *Sanatana-Dharma* have been practising towards each other throughout Hindu history. Neither the missionary nor the *mulla* will concede for a moment that any Hindu religious sect can claim to be a religion. Neither of them will grant to any Hindu religious sect even the status of an inferior religion. Any missionary who is honest to his calling will confirm that, according to Christianity,

the whole of Hinduism is heathenism, which word the dictionaries define as the condition of those who are devoid of any religion whatsoever. Any mulla who knows his *kalmia* will clarify that, according to Islam, the whole of Hinduism is *kufr* which means “a wilful denial of the one and only true revelation.”

Nor is the missionary or the *mulla* prepared to practise *samabhava* towards any Hindu religious sect. Each of them pleads his helplessness in this respect because his “scriptures” do not sanction such “sophistry”. And each of them appeals to the Hindus to understand his position and help him honour the fundamentals of his faith. The faith of the missionary as also of the *mulla* makes it obligatory on him to convert to his own creed as many Hindus as he can, by all means including force and fraud. The Hindus are expected to understand, indeed appreciate, this obligation also as a proof positive of the missionary’s and the *mulla*’s profound devotion to his own religion. But both of them deny to the Hindus the same right to convert any of their followers to the latter’s ancestral faith. Each of them points out that apostasy is punishable with death according to the fundamentals of his faith. The fact that the missionary or the *mulla* cannot enforce these fundamentals under the present dispensation in India does not mean that the fundamentals have become invalid or should be refashioned. It only means that the Christians or the muslims should strive to change the dispensation so that they can enforce the fundamentals without let or hindrance.

Meanwhile, both of them hail as very helpful the Hindu slogan of *sarva-dharma-samabhava* (all religions are equal). The slogan proves, if proof was needed, that the Hindus do not mind some of their own flock going over to Christianity

or Islam. It does not, should not, make a difference to a Hindu if he becomes a christian or a muslim. Do not the Hindus proclaim, day and night and from the house-tops, that Christianity and Islam are as good religious as their own *Sanatana Dharma*?

Hindu society is thus trapped by a slogan which it has itself coined and made respectable. It cannot turn away from practising *samabhava* towards Christianity and Islam even when these creeds decimate Hindu society by continuous conversions. Nor can it expect *samabhava* from Christianity or Islam when it tries to win back some of its own lost sheep. In such a situation, Christianity as well as Islam can resort to violence which is legitimate according to the fundamental tenets of these faiths.

It is the same sort of trap into which a democracy gets entangled the moment it concedes that communism is also a political ideology as good as the democratic ideology, and that a communist party should be permitted to function as freely as any democratic party. Communism also pleads that its very first premises put it under an obligation to destroy democracy, and that a democracy, by its very definition, is duty-bound to facilitate the spread of communism. And a communist party can legitimately take to the path of an armed struggle whenever a democracy tries to deny this fundamental democratic right to the party.

Meaning of Meenakshipuram

The mass conversions at Meenakshipuram seem to have shaken Hindu society out of its sloganized slumber. But the credit for this shock-therapy should go to the spokesmen of Islam, in India and abroad. Hindu society would have taken these conversions also in its stride, as in the past, had not

the spokesmen of Islam proclaimed publicly that mass conversion of the weaker sections of Hindu society was part of a political plan to win power for Islam, and convert secular India into an Islamic state.

Hindu society has had a full and first-hand taste of an Islamic state in the not too distant past. But it is doubtful if the spectre of such a state would have haunted Hindu Society, had not Pakistan and Iran demonstrated the model with such earnest showmanship.

As a cumulative effect of all these events, a new phrase has gained currency in India's prevalent political parlance — *the politics of conversion*. What was regarded as a religious event till recently has now come to be recognized as a political event. This is a great gain. But it is only the advent of an awakening which would have to go a long way before it achieves an adequate perspective. For, Meenakshipuram has only dramatized a process of subversion which has been preying upon Hindu society for well-nigh thirteen hundred years.

The first current of this process entered India in the persons of muslim merchants and sufis who settled down in several parts of India, particularly Kerala, in the second half of the seventh century A.D. It surged forward when an Arab army under Mohammed bin Qasim succeeded in securing a foothold on the soil of Sindh in the first quarter of the 8th century. It overflowed the ramparts in our North-West when Kabul and Zabul were overrun by the Islamized Turks in the second half of the 10th century. It reached the heartland of India at the close of the 12th century and spread eastwards and southwards till it touched every nook and corner of this ancient land.

The tide turned at the end of the 17th century A.D. But in the meanwhile large sections of Hindus in the East and the West had been alienated from their ancestral

religion and culture. The separation of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh from Bharatavarsha was at one time regarded as the culmination of this current. But the consolidation of its aggression has not made it content with what it has already submerged. It is now looking forward to engulfing for good the residue that is Hindustan.

Another current of this process of subversion entered India in the wake of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British adventurers. A horde of missionaries belonging to different denominations of Christianity and coming from many Western countries including the Americas, swarmed towards our shores. Christianity secured firm footholds in Southern, Central and North-Eastern India while Western imperialism was ruling the roost. By the middle of the twentieth century Western imperialism was dead and gone. But the missionaries continued to multiply. Their experience over the past five hundred years has emboldened them to envisage a day when India will become yet another christian colony.

The process cannot be understood fully and in its inherent dynamics if we keep our gaze confined to what Christianity and Islam have been doing in India. We would have to travel backwards in time and go to the beginnings when the politics of conversion was first perfected in the garb of religion and projected into the midst of the pagan societies as unsuspecting as Hindu society. In India itself the politics of conversion is thirteen hundred years old in the case of Islam, and nearly five hundred years old in the case of Christianity. But India is a late-comer in this maelstrom. The world at large has been familiar with the politics of conversion for almost two thousand years. Whole continents had already been conquered by means of this politics before it arrived in India.

The first principles of the politics of conversion were formulated by the founding fathers of the Christian church in the very first century of what has become known as the Christian era. Its methods were perfected in ancient Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, Rome, Carthage and Constantinople, over a period of 300 years, at the end of which it conquered the Roman empire. In the next 700 years, it conquered the whole of Europe from Ireland to the Urals and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. It started surging towards distant shores at the beginning of the 16th century and, in the course of the next 300 years, it conquered North and South America, the West Indies, the Caribbeans, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and several parts of Africa. Its impact was now being felt in the rest of Africa and over the whole of Asia.

Meanwhile, another politics of conversion was taking shape in Medina in the second quarter of the 7th century. By the end of that quarter it engulfed the whole of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran Egypt. In the next one hundred years it conquered the whole of North Africa, Sicily, Spain, Khorasan and Turkistan, and entered India via Sindh. In the course of the next few hundred years it conquered Asia Minor, Malaya and Indonesia, and invaded the Philippines where it was rebuffed by Christianity which was already getting entrenched in that land.

The same thing happened in Asia Minor and the Balkans. Their fortunes waxed and waned for several hundred years. Christianity came out victorious in the final round at the close of the 15th century and resumed its conquest of the New World which had just come under its purview. Now the Islamic politics has revived and is competing with its sister faith on more than equal terms in Africa and India. The petro-dollars have come as a timely shot in the arm of Islam.

It would be interesting to survey the genesis and history of the politics of conversion which pass as Christianity and Islam. In the process we will discover the fundamental formulas and the mature methods developed and employed by the two for achieving what they have already achieved and what they aim at in future. The discovery may be useful to Hindu society in its encounter with these subversive techniques.

Politics of Conversion Called Christianity

Christianity generally describes itself as the Church. The designation is derived from the Greek “Kuros” which mean “mighty”. The Greek word is a cognate of the Sanskrit “shoora” which signifies a “warrior”. Militancy is thus inbuilt in the psychology which projected this platform.

There is no evidence that Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, had any intention to found a religious order or sect. The gospels, even when a lot of their language has got garbled in the mouths of their narrators, reveal him primarily as a mystic. He gave to his people, the Jews, the usual spiritual message—the Kingdom of Heaven is not to be sought in the world outside, the world of space and time; the Kingdom is with us, in our hearts, and also near at hand for all those who see it in right earnest.

Moreover, Jesus was too much of a free spiritual seeker to become the founder of any closed community or organization, far less the founder of a farflung monolith like the later-day christian Church. Those passages in the gospels which Church cites as its source and inspiration are after-thought on the very face of it. The passages do not fit in psychically with the rest of what Jesus had to say. The responsibility for converting Jesus into the “only son of god” rests upon his disciples, and also upon Paul, whom the

Church hailed as apostles in later history. Christian theology—dogmatics, polemics, apologetics and the rest—is not even remotely related to what Jesus had stated about himself or about God or about the World.

It is significant that all disciples of Jesus ran away or repudiated him when the temple guards of Jerusalem came to arrest him. None of them was present when Jesus was crucified, except John who watched from a safe distance. The body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and entombed by two kindly Jews who had some influence with the Roman governor. Again, none of the disciples accompanied the three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—who went to visit the tomb of Jesus two days later.

Yet as soon as the disciples were sure that Jesus was dead and could not contradict them, they started proclaiming that Jesus had appeared to them in a vision, that Jesus had bodily risen into heaven before their eyes, and that the Holy Spirit which was of Jesus had entered into them. They flocked back to Jerusalem after the dust of controversy about Jesus had settled down. And they now claimed that they had been endowed by the Holy Spirit with miraculous powers of inspiration, speech and healing!

Saul, who became known as Paul in Christian history, was not even a disciple of Jesus. He had not met Jesus during the latter's life-time. Stephen, a disciple of Jesus had enraged the Jew in Jerusalem by abusing them for their failure to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. He was sentenced to death by stoning. Saul participated in carrying out the sentence. Saul now traveled to Damascus to kill some more followers of Jesus whom he suspected to be hiding in the city. Something happened to him outside

Damascus, or so he claimed. Most probably it was the guilt of killing Stephen which had surfaced. In any case, Saul reincarnated himself as Paul and proclaimed that Jesus *was* the Son of God!

Paul travelled to many cities in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece wherever some Jewish communities were to be found. He made some converts to his new-fangled faith. But, by and large, the Jews were not prepared to listen to him. Paul got so angry at this attitude of the Jews as to announce that henceforth men were to be saved not by the Mosaic Law but only by an active faith in Christ as the Son of God. Jesus had by now been transformed into Christ, the anointed one.

There was a great stir amongst the Jews everywhere when they learnt that Paul had repudiated the law of Moses. Paul's life was now in danger, wherever he went, which seems to have had a very sobering effect on him. He rushed back to Jerusalem and offered to repent and undergo the rites of purification at the Temple. The Jews, however, were in no mood to be mollified. He was about to be flogged on order from a Roman magistrate when he revealed that he was the son of a Roman citizen and that, as such, he was entitled to a trial in Rome. That is how he secured a safe conduct to the imperial city.

It is from Rome that Paul fired a number of frenzied letters to Jewish communities elsewhere. The Church eulogized these letters and incorporated them in the *New Testament*. It is in these letters that we find the first formulations of what became a full-fledged but completely closed Christian theology in due course. It is in these letters that, having finally despaired of the Jews, he wrote: "Understand, then, that this message of God's salvation has been sent to the heathen. They will listen to it."

Contours of Christian Theology

According to Paul, every man born of woman inherited the guilt of Adam and could be saved from eternal damnation only by the atoning death of Christ. Christ was the Wisdom of God as also the first born Son of God. Christ was before all things, in him all things existed; through him all things had been created. Christ was not the Messiah who would deliver the Jews from bondage; he was the Logos who had become flesh and whose death would deliver all men. Paul also promised that “the Lord is coming soon” and that the “appointed time has grown very short.” On second thoughts, he amended that the second coming of Christ would be delayed until after Satan appeared on the scene and “proclaims himself to be God”.

John, called Son of Thunder in christian tradition, took up from where Paul had left. Pointing towards Nero and Rome, he proclaimed that the Satan and his regime of wickedness had already arrived. The Roman empire, he thundered, was headed towards some great calamities in which all except the christians would perish. The last judgement would come after a thousand years when the dead would be raised from their graves; all those whose names were not entered in the Book of Life would be “flung into a burning lake of fire and brimstone”. The Christians would then “gather for God’s great banquet and will eat the bodies of kings, commanders and mighty men... the bodies of all men who have not heeded the call of Christ”. Next, a “New Jerusalem would descend on earth” which would be inherited by the Christians who would not know “death any longer, not night, nor any grief or pain”.

This theology of great promise for the Christians and greath punishment for the rest of mankind, was more or

less complete in its essentials by the time John died towards the end of first century A.D. It had borrowed some of the language of later-day Greek philosophies like Neo-Platonism, as also some symbols from the mysticism of Egypt, Persia and Asia Minor. The language and the symbolism has led people to give a mystic meaning to this theology. They forget that the founding fathers had formulated it as literally and historically true. That is why the Church had always laid such great emphasis on the historicity of Jesus who ascended the cross to become the Christ.

Human reason revolves round concrete evidence, empirical or mystical, and has no use for affirmations of mere faith, however hysterical or high-sounding. But Christian theology had no use for human reason in the realm of its dogma, though it used this reason to the point of casuistry when it came to its own polemics and apologetics. It was based upon a denial of human reason from the first day of its birth in the fevered brains of people like Paul and John. The theologians who followed made this lack of reason the basis of an inverted snobbery. Tertullian, a theologian from Carthage, summed up the case for Christianity when he said: "God's Son died; it is believable because it is absurd. He was buried and rose again; it is certain because it is unbelievable." Who could beat that in a debate based upon evidence of human experience, and human reason?

Human reason is also the basis of a true universalism. True universalism recognizes that although basic human nature is the same, always and everywhere, yet different human beings dwell at different stages of development—mental, moral, psychic and spiritual—and, therefore, stand in need of a diversity of doctrines, philosophies, aspirations,

godheads, and ways of worship. Pagan religions of Europe, Africa and Asia, which Christianity destroyed in due course, recognized this true universalism and, therefore, caused no conflict between different communities or wars between different nations on account of religion. Christianity, on the other hand, propounded only one historical personality as the *sole* saviour, propounded only one theology as the infallible gateway to God, and propped up only church as exclusive trustee of truth. It was a very gross violation of universalism. It divided humanity into christians and non-christians. Christians were now called upon to convert or kill all those who differed from them. At the same time, Christian theologians went about boasting that their creed and church were the harbingers of universalism in human history!

History is a witness that all doctrines, however fantastic or fanciful, have found their fans (or victims) in all societies. Kautilya has elaborated in his *Arthashastra* the psychological principles which alienate some people from their own society, and lead them straight into the lap of those who are out to subvert that society. The first group of people who can be alienated are the *maneevarga*, that is, those who are conceited and complain that they have been denied what is their due on account of birth, brains or qualities of character. The second group consists of the *kruddhavarga*, that is, those who are self-righteous, who claim that they alone know how to set things right and who become angry because the powers that be do not listen to them. The third group comprises the *lubdhavarga*, that is, those who put a price on everything and sell themselves to whosoever can pay the price. The fourth group is the *bheetavarga*, that is, those who have committed crimes, are afraid of being caught and, therefore, collaborate with

whosoever is out to overthrow the existing order and the laws which threaten them.

A study of the Roman scene in the three centuries preceding the Christian takeover at Constantinople in 323 A.D., leaves a strong impression that the Church was instinctively employing the psychological principles propounded by Kautilya. The pagan societies in the Roman empire were encumbered with an elite which had become spiritually bankrupt, morally neutral, and devoid of intellectual discrimination. The common people in these societies loved their gods, flocked to their temples, and rejoiced in their sacrifices and religious procession. But most members of the elite, who had been educated in schools set up by a variety of sophists, could no longer find any satisfaction in the hallowed traditions of their society, nor harbour any aspiration beyond personal ambition for power and pelf.

Christian missionaries could find quite a few and easy converts amongst these upper classes precisely because the Church had declared war on their society. Christian theology helped these converts to betray their Gods, their culture and their country, with a clean conscience; they could now believe that the betrayal was in the interests of a “higher cause” and a “loftier purpose”. Incidentally, it also helped the upper classes to avoid military service to a state which the Church had placed under a taboo. Like the later-day hippies in the United States of America, the upper classes were now free to “make love instead of war”.

Myth of Christian Martyrdom

Christian historians have made much of the “martyrdom” suffered by the early Christians under several Roman regimes. No pagan records have survived to tell the

other side of the story. But the Christian records themselves provide ample evidence as to who was the sinner and who the sinned-against. The Christians abused and poured contempt upon the pagan Gods and Goddesses in the foulest possible language. They denounced pagan culture as degenerate, devilish and immoral. They called upon all christians not to render military service or pay taxes to a regime run by what they described as the Antichrist and the Devil, John described Rome as the “harlot who sins on the great waters, with whom kings of the earth have committed fornication”; Rome was the “Whore of Babylon”, he wrote. Roman society was not yet entirely dead and it was but natural that some Romans reacted strongly against their enemies and in their own defence, every now and then.

Roman records which have survived also show that it was not the ruling classes but the common people who reacted against christian aggression. Mob action against christians in many a city street forced the hands of authority quite a few times. But, by and large, the upper classes either remained indifferent, or smiled indulgently on what they regarded as a conflict between tweedledum and tweedledee, or privately advised the christians not to provoke the “mob”. The common people thus found themselves leaderless and felt bewildered in the face of apathy on the part of rulers whom they regarded as their own. On the other hand, the “martyrdom” suffered by the christians, who were in a minority for quite some time, evoked sympathy for them, particularly amongst the upper class women whose hearts “bled for innocent victims of mob violence.”

The Christian minority succeeded in the long run because of the two peculiar methods it used—methods

with which the pagan societies were unfamiliar, and which these societies did not know how to counter.

First, the concept of a wholetime missionary, who had nothing to do except convert people, was unknown to pagan societies. These societies had their priests who helped them perform certain religious rites, at home as well as at places of public worship and pilgrimage. But the priests themselves were householders who had many other things to do besides helping their patrons. The saints, mystics and philosophers in these societies advised those who visited them about methods of self-improvement or the paths towards spiritual progress. Neither did they know, nor did they have the aptitude to train their devotees in the art of combat against a rival creed. The christian missionary thus found the field free for practising his casuistry on simple and straight-forward people who could neither argue with him till the end of time, nor put up a show of piety at which the missionary was a past-master.

The Christian Church: A State Within A State

Secondly, the christian missionaries went on organizing into a monolithic and militant Church the community of their converts. The Church was created after the pattern of the Roman empire—territorially as well as administratively. The entire imperial territory, at the centre as well as in the provinces, was divided into parishes, dioceses, districts and other divisions over which priests, deacons, archdeacons, bishops, prelates and archbishops presided with despotic power derived from a “divine revelation”. In due course, the Church could raise its own resources, provide for an increasing number of missionaries, build monasteries full of militant monks, and sent money to christian

communities in poorer places. The roads, sea-routes and other means of communications, which the Roman state had built and devised for its own use, also became vehicles of the fast spreading christian creed. The pagan people, on the other hand, were divided into many communities each of which led its own life in terms of its own cultural traditions. They were hardly in a position to withstand the christian onslaught which went on gaining might and momentum with the passing of every year.

These methods of the Church were matured and made progressively more powerful in the midst of heresy-hunting and schisms which were inevitable in a community which looked with suspicion on every departure from dogma, and every innovation in ritual. Far from weakening the Church, these recurring quarrels made it ever more ruthless towards those whom it regarded as its enemies. Dogma was doggedly tailored to the needs of Church authority and the authority in turn served the spread of dogma with an uncompromising zeal.

By the end of the 3rd century A.D., the Church had become not only a powerful edifice next only to the imperial government itself, but had also evolved a well-defined dogma deceptively dressed in the language of Greek philosophy and Egyptian mysticism. No wonder that it started finding an increasing number of adherents amongst merchants who had money, amongst politicians who wielded power, amongst military commanders who were superstitious or in need of popular support, and amongst gilded ladies who were out to make the best of both the worlds.

The mother of emperor Severus (222-235 A.D.) had become a disciple of Origen, a well-known christian

theologian. Emperor Philip the Arabian (240-249 A.D.) had himself become a Christian. The wife of emperor Galerius implored him, when he fell sick in 311 A.D. to make peace with the “undefeated God of the Christian”. He promulgated an edict recognizing Christianity as a legitimate religion, immediately before he died the same year. Helena the mother of Constantine, who converted the Roman empire into a Christian theocracy, was a Christian convert and exercised considerable influence in the counsels of her son.

Divine Right of Kings

Scholars have debated the question whether the conversion of Constantine was religious or political. It is difficult to give a definite answer at this distance in time, more so because the evidence is conflicting. But one thing which decided Constantine in favour of Christianity was the *divine right of kings* coupled with *dynastic succession*—a dogma which the Church had evolved and was prepared to extend to any contender for power who accepted Christianity as the state religion.

The Roman state had continued to pretend to be a republic long after it had become an imperial edifice for all practical purposes. But there was no dynastic succession and no divine right of kings known to Roman political parlance. Every emperor had to wade his way through blood before he could ascend the imperial throne. Constantine saw the future of his family as well as of his own imperial power bound with the Christian dogma of dynastic succession and the divine right of kings. He removed his capital from Rome to Constantinople to avoid resistance which was likely to be stronger in the former city.

And he succeeded in the gamble with the help of the Church.

But Constantine was not the last to sanctify his imperial crown with the insignia of the Church. In the years to come, the kings of Celts, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Germans, Bulgars, Danes and Slavs solicited and obtained the aid of the same Church to proclaim absolute power over their subjects. A king in these pagan societies was only the first amongst equals, and he could be dethroned if he fell foul of the time honoured tradition of allowing autonomy to local units. The Church helped these democratic monarchs to become unbridled despots who, in turn, helped the Church to stamp out all pagan practices—religious, cultural and social.

Destruction of Pagan Religions

The pattern followed by the Christianized monarchies vis-a-vis pagan religions was the same in every country of Asia, Africa and Europe.

To start with, the pagan temples were closed, pagan processions were prohibited, pagan sacrifices were declared sacrilegious, pagan priests were deprived of the privileges which they had enjoyed since times immemorial, and state patronage of pagan schools was withdrawn. Simultaneously, finances were made available for building christian churches, seminaries and monasteries; christian ceremonies and public festivals were patronized by kings, princes and princesses; christian sacraments were made obligatory on all citizens; and Christian priests and monks were granted special privilege such as non-payment of state taxes and non-performance of public duties. The Church was permitted to inherit extensive properties from

those who wanted to will that way. Soon it became a device to save properties from being sequestered to the state. Those who could not inherit properties legally got them willed to the Church which they themselves joined in some capacity or the other. And the Church was also allowed to hear and decide such legal disputes as were brought before it by the citizens.

In the next round, the pagan temples were demolished or converted into christian churches; properties attached to pagan shrines were transferred to the christian shrines; pagan scriptures were burnt; and pagan priests were killed unless they agreed to get converted. The campaigns for destruction of pagan temples, burning of pagan scriptures, and killing or converting of pagan priests were announced and sanctioned by the hierarchs of the Church and the christian mobs who carried out the commands, particularly in the countryside, were mostly led by christian monks living in the fast multiplying monasteries.

It would be a long story if we were to relate, country by country, what the Church did to pagan religions and cultures, prevalent from times immemorial, in Europe, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. It is a story of how the Church subverted one pagan society after another; how hundreds of thousands of pagan temples and sacred shrines were destroyed; how millions of "heathens" were dispatched to the "christian hell" by fire and sword; and how the last vestiges of every pagan religion and culture were stamped out.

What is still more painful about this story is how some of the savages and lunatics who instigated, inspired, sanctioned and supported this sanguine saga were sanctified as saints by the Church. Many pious people are

impressed as soon as they find the letters “St.” added to a name. They would be shocked if they found out what the honorific hides most of the time.

On top of it all, the Church labeled the pagan people as “barbarians” who had “invaded” the then “civilized world” of the Roman Empire. Scholars in several European countries have now delved deeper into the pre-christian past of their societies. The evidence they have pieced together about the quality and character of the pagan people tells an altogether different story. It was not the pagans but the christians who were the first barbarians in human history. The doubtful distinction of passing off politics under the cloak of religion must go to the christian Church in ancient and medieval Europe.

Christianity in the New World

There was no scope left for expansion after 1000 A.D. or thereabout, because its path towards the East and the South had, meanwhile, been blocked by another though similar politics which had taken shape on the sands of Arabia. The new world of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand and the old world of Africa, India, Southeast Asia and the Far East were not yet accessible to the Church, though its individual missionaries were mapping out the scene in different Asian countries. Meanwhile, Christianity had become more and more brutalized as a result of several centuries of heresy-hunting, inquisition and the burning of “witches”. Spain and Portugal were in the van of this process of brutalization.

It was the Spaniards who discovered America towards the close of the 15th century A.D. about the same time the Portuguese travelled round the western and southern

coast of Africa to reach South India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Indochina, Korea, China and Japan. The Philippines were soon to be invaded by the Spaniards who crossed the Pacific from their base in Mexico. The missionaries found that all these countries and continents were inhabited by pagan societies as unsuspecting as the pagan societies of ancient Europe, Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa. The politics of conversion called Christianity started playing its game once again, and over a far larger field. The Pope in Rome drew a line on a certain longitude, and handed over the two hemispheres to the two Christian nations—Spain and Portugal.

As soon as the Spaniards saw the vast expanse of North, Central and South America, they were filled with the conviction that it was the very land which their “Lord God” had “promised” to them at the dawn of human history. The “divine promise” was all the more promising because of the plenty of gold it contained, particularly in those parts which later became known as Mexico, Peru and Guatemala. The Red Indians who inhabited these lands appeared to be intruders to the Spaniards. At least that is how the sailors and soldiers of the Church argued amongst themselves. The fact that these Red Indians were welcoming the Christians with open arms, and offering them plenty of gifts including gold, did not change the situation. It only confirmed that the lands for which the Red Indians were not prepared to fight could not really belong to them.

The slaughter and pillage that followed all over America—north, centre and south—still remains unparalleled in the annals of human history. It was a slaughter of unarmed people who had given no provocation, and who were prepared to share with the

Spaniards whatever wealth they had. Their only “crime” was that they were not christians and the “Lord God” had not “promised” to them the lands on which they had lived for untold ages.

The Red Indians who escaped the sword of the Christian soldiers were enslaved by the plantation pioneers who followed soon after. The missionaries, in their turn, found a rich harvest for conversion in these harassed human beings. The “poor devils” had lost everything in this life. Their bodies were not likely to last for long under the lashes of the Christian slave-drivers. But their souls could be saved for a life everlasting after the second coming of Christ. Meanwhile, the Portuguese were selling to the Spaniards a lot more slaves which the former had captured from all over Africa. The missionaries had their hands full with the work of saving souls.

In course of time, the Christians from Spain were joined by many more from other European countries—particularly the Catholics from France and the Protestants from Great Britain. They frequently came to blows over the division of the land and the loot. But none of them had a thought to spare for the Red Indians who, in due course, almost disappeared from North America and whose remnants were converted to christianity in Central and South America. It was only when the Dark Age, ushered in by Christianity, came to a close towards the end of the eighteenth century that the Red Indians were recognised as human beings, equal to the christians who had killed most of them and enslaved the rest. But the Church was not prepared to concede that its mission amongst the Red Indians had been anything except a mission of “Christian mercy”. The Church kept on brandishing its belief that the great Mayan culture in Central America was a species of

“barbarism”, specializing in “human sacrifices” at the alter of its “blood-thirsty” gods. The Church was to tell similar stories about the Hindus, though in less loud tones, because the Hindus were soon in a position to hit back.

Christian Politics of Conversion in Asia

Due to a number of circumstances, the Portuguese did not do so well in the lands which the Pope had bequeathed to them. But they had an ample opportunity to practise the politics of conversion along the Western coast of India. Francis Xavier who presided over this politics for a few years had the Christian satisfaction of demolishing a number of Hindu temples in South India and seeing several thousand “heathens”⁴ slaughtered in Goa. He invited the king of Spain to use the secular arm for the spread of christianity in India. The Church sanctified him as the “Patron Saint of the East”, and his corpse was enshrined in Goa, to be worshipped in perpetuity by the victims of his politics.

By the time the French, the British and the Dutch appeared on the Eastern scene, Christianity had been found out in the West for what it had always been in fact—power-hungary politics masquerading as religion. The later-day European imperialists, therefore, had only a marginal use for the christian missionary. He could be used to beguile the natives. But he could not be allowed to dictate the parallel politics of imperialism. Moreover, the East had some highly developed pagan cultures which could discuss on equal terms quite a few fundamentals with the christian fanatics, and which were also not too weak militarily.

The field for the christian politics of conversion has become considerably smaller in Asia due to the resurgence of Islam, and the triumph of Communism in China, North

Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. If a missionary converts a single muslim in any Islamic country, he is sure to be murdered immediately by a muslim mob, even before the Islamic state has considered the case for his expulsion. Nor can the missionary find a convert in any communist country. He will be immediately caught as an "imperialist agent" and sent to a labour camp. Buddhist Burma has also seen through his game and barred his entry. It is only in India, Ceylon and Japan that the missionary continues to practice his profession effectively. India is perhaps his most fertile field because India has yet to understand the true character of Christianity in spite of the opportunity provided by the missionaries over the past five hundred years.

Politics of Conversion Called Islam

Although Islam entered India some 800 years before Christianity, it appeared on the world scene some 600 years later. By the time Mohammed proclaimed himself a prophet in 610 A.D., the christian politics of conversion had already conquered all those countries in Europe, Asia and Africa which had formed parts of the Roman Empire at the height of its expansion. The Church was casting covetous eyes towards the North and the East in Europe, as towards the sprawling Persian empire in the South-East, seeking fresh pastures for its enthusiastic enterprise. The desert of Arabia did not count for much in the calculations of the Church. Some missionaries had visited the southern parts of the Peninsula and made some converts. But the "chosen ones" had been left to live alone the company of Arab "heathens" and the "accursed Jews" who had quite a few colonies in the oases spread over the central and

northern parts of the desert. Little did the Church suspect that the “heathens” of Arabia were to challenge very soon the christian monopoly of the politics of conversion.

“islam” is derived from the Arabic “sallam” and has been presented to mean “peace” or “surrender”, depending upon the time and place of presentation. In a country and at a time where and when muslims are not in power, it is presented as “peace”. But as soon as the muslims become dominant, it means surrender, and that too at the point of the sword. The surrender is supposed to be made to *allah* the *only* God according to Islam. But *allah* is sure to spurn the surrender unless it is preceded by a surrender to *the* prophet, the sole spokesman for *allah*. In effect, it means a surrender to whichever *mulla* happens to be hailed as the authentic interpreter of the *quran* and the *hadis*, in the eyes of the Sultan who wields the sword, the sole arbiter under Islam in matters moral and spiritual.

While Jesus was not the founder of the Church and had nothing to do with the dogmas of Christianity, the *ummah* or *millat*, which became the vehicle of Islam was founded and given a finished form as well as a fanatic ideology by Mohammed himself. Again, while the personality, preachings and performance of Jesus can be pitted against the Church and its dogma, there is little in Islam which is not derived directly from the personality, preaching and performance of its prophet.

Allah and His Prophet

What exactly happened to Mohammed in the mountain cave outside Mecca has remained a controversial question. We are told by the theologians of Islam that his “experience” is not verifiable by any other human being,

nor is his “revelation” subject to human reason. One has to accept Mohammed’s word that he was the *last* and the *most perfect* prophet, and that whatever he said or did in a state of *wahi* or otherwise was the pronouncement and prescription from “almighty *allah*”.

Those who took Mohammed at his word and accepted his prophethood were acclaimed by him as momins, while those who rejected his mission were denounced as kafirs. The momins did not have to be better men than the kafirs in terms of consciousness or charcter. They had only to recite the *kalmia*—there is no god but *allah*, and Mohammed is *the* prophet—and they became qualified to kill as many kafirs as they could, or pleased.

Allah himself had been a part of the Arab pantheon at Mecca for many centuries past. He had shared his divinity with a large number of other Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the Arabs, and he even enjoyed a certain primacy. The Bedouin, who roamed the desert, flocked to Mecca at appointed times for pilgrimage, and worshipped his Gods and Goddesses with whatever offerings he could spare from his meagre possessions. Neither the Bedouins nor the settled citizens of Arabia had ever suspected that their *allah* was soon going to become the sole cock of the walk, and the cause of a bloody and prolonged strife in many parts of the world.

It is also debatable as to why Mohammed whose *allah* alone, out of a large-sized Arab pantheon. He could have as easily bestowed this singular honour on any other God or Goddess in Mecca, or in the temple of some other town in Arabia. The Gods and Goddesses had obviously no choice in the matter. The only rational explanation is that the sound of the name *allah* was near to the sound of *Elohim*, the God of the Jews. Jesus had also cried out to Eli before

he died on the cross. There are too many Judaic elements in Islam to rule out this explanation. But whatever the reason for Mohammed's choice, there is no reason to doubt that *allah* would not have assumed the status he did without the help of Mohammed. It is small wonder that *allah* in his turn felt so tender towards Mohamed, and proclaimed the latter to be the last and the most perfect prophet in human history.

Things started happening soon after the covenant between *allah* and his *last* prophet was struck in the mountain cave outside Mecca, through the good offices of an angel named Gabriel. The Quraish who were the dominant tribe in Mecca would not have minded a member of their clan acclaiming *allah* as the only God. They were used to such prophets appearing in Mecca and other Arabian towns, every now and then. They were a liberal people in matters of religion and did not mind how a man fancied himself or his god. But they were painfully surprised by the proclivities of this new prophet. He had started frequenting the forum outside the *kaaba* to denounce, in a rather strong language, all that they had cherished so far—their Gods and Goddesses, their cultural traditions, their social system, and what not—day in and day out.

Muslim mullas have made a martyr out of Mohammed during his twelve years of prophethood at Mecca, the same way as the Church has made martyrs out of the early missionaries at Rome. They have also explained away or justified the vindictiveness of Mohammed towards his own people of the Quraish by citing the "many injustices including violence" which Mohammed had "suffered" at Mecca. No contemporary records of the Quraish have survived to tell the other side of the story. But there is

enough in the contemporary Islamic records to clinch the issue as to who was the aggressor and who the aggressed-against. Here was a man sending all ancestors of the Arabs, including his own mother and father, to an eternal hell, and promising the same hell to the present and future generations of the Arabs, unless they accepted him as the *last* prophet of the only *allah*. The Quraish would have been a dead people indeed if they had not reacted, and told Mohammed to leave their city for wherever he could find a more attentive audience.

It is for this “crime” of the Quraish that Muslim *mullas* have blackened the religion and culture of pre-Islamic Arabia as *Jahiliya* (ignorance). The *mullas* forget that the Arabic language which is their proud possession in the *quran* and the *hadis* was not invented by their prophet at the spur of the moment, nor “revealed” by *allah* out of the blue. This rich language had a long ancestry, and reflected the genius of a culture which was deep as well as endowed with diverse dimensions. The pre-Islamic Arabs were a pagan people who allowed a God or Goddess to each according to his or her need and who expected worship from each according to his or her capacity. They had many other qualities of head and heart which the post-Islamic Arab society and culture lost completely.

Islam professes to have brought peace to the warring tribes of Arabia. But its own chronicles tell of nothing except wars, more fierce than ever before, which the Arabs fought, first amongst themselves, and later on with their near and distant neighbours on all sides, soon after they were forced to surrender to Islam.

Islam and Christianity Compared

The Christian Church had taken 300 years to conquer

the Roman empire. The Islamic *millat* triumphed much faster over Arabia—in a matter of 10 years after Mohammed arrived in Yathrib which became known as Medina after a massacre of its Jewish population. But in spite of this difference in time-scale the methods used by the *millat* were more or less the same as were used earlier by the Church. The difference arose because of the different situations in which the two politics of conversion took shape.

The Roman empire was a powerful political edifice. The Church had to build a state within the state before it could subvert Roman society. Arabia, on the other hand, was divided into a number of independent tribal republics, with nothing to share amongst them except a fierce love for local freedom. The *millat* had only to build the apparatus of a centralised state—a reliable revenue system and a standing army—in order to be able to reduce the tribal republics, one by one.

The religious mask worn by the politics of conversion called Islam was also more transparent than the thick veil of verbiage with which Christianity had to decorate itself. Christianity had its beginnings in an environment suffused with sophistry. It had to acquire a similar language and idiom to percolate itself. Islam, on the other hand, was invented in an environment which was simple and straightforward. It could, therefore, advocate the politics of conversion with less hypocrisy and shoot straight from the shoulder.

The Momins and Kafirs

If we leave aside the myths and legends which Islam borrowed from Judaism—lock, stock and barrel—the message of Islam was very simple, almost simplistic.

To start with, it divided Arabian society into two tight compartments—the momins and kafirs, The momins were asked to muster together into a militant *millat*—armed to the teeth, and ready to use force and/or fraud according as occasion demanded. The *millat* surprised the settlements and caravans of the kafirs in a series of armed raids. The kafirs who were always caught unawares had no choice but to surrender, many a time without a single skirmish. The swordsmen of the *millat* selected and slaughtered, in cold blood, all kafirs who were capable of bearing arms. The movable and immovable properties of the kafirs were appropriated by the *millat*. The women and children of the kafirs were captured and sold as slaves or freed for ransom, after members of the *millat* had their pick of the maidens.

Once in a while, the *millat* discovered that the kafirs were in no moode to surrender in spite of the surprise, and that the armed conflict might turn out to its disadvantage. Then the *millat* made overtures of peace on the condition that the kafirs got converted to Islam. The lives and families of the converts were spared but not their properties which were taken away as booty.

The *mullas* take pride that Islam did away with tribal ties and united all Arabs into one solid brotherhood. It must be admitted that the *millat*'s method of doing away with tribal ties was very effective indeed. Quite often, one or more members of a family or tribe happened to be momins, while their other kinsmen were ranged against them as kafirs. The *millat* encouraged a brother to engage his brother in armed combat, so that one of them was sure to get killed. In case of kafirs who had to be slaughtered after the war, the *millat* searched its own ranks for the nearest

kinsmen to perform the 'pious' deed. A *momin* was supposed to retain or recognise no relationship except that of a common creed. All other human ties were now rendered irrelevant.

The momins were, of course, not risking their lives for nothing. Four-fifths of the booty and prisoners captured in a war was their share according to a 'law' laid down by the prophet himself. The prisoners included quite a number of young and fair maidens who could set any momin's mouth watering. No wonder that the infant state of Islam at Medina was able to assemble very soon quite a number of "dedicated" swordsmen without spending a penny from its own coffers. The principles of free enterprise applied to plunder and pillage was functioning with full force.

In case a *momin* got killed in the 'holy war', he was promised a permanent place in heaven. "The blessed", said the *quran*, "will be dressed in silk brocades and adorned with gems. They will recline on couches and be served by handsome youths, and eat from trees bowing down to fill their hands. There will be virgins never yet touched by men or jinn, in beauty like the jacinth and coral stone ... with swelling bosoms but modest gaze, with eyes as fair and pure as sheltered eggs, and bodies made of musk, and free from the imperfections and indignities of mortal flesh." According to one tradition, quoted by Will Durant, each *momin* was promised 72 of these houries, who would never age or stop being solicitous. According to other traditions, the number could be many times more. It was surely not a mean attraction.

The balance one-fifth of the booty and prisoners of war were assigned to the Islamic state which the prophet had set up at Medina to start with and which moved to other

cities in due course, under the caliphs or *amir-ul-mominin*. This one-fifth had to be the pick of the bunch before members of a military expedition could claim their share. No wonder that the Islamic state at Medina was very soon rolling in riches. The wealth which flowed to the Islamic state in later times grew progressively in volume and variety, and the stage was set for the flowering of that Islamic “culture” in which the *millat* takes such mighty pride. The prophet and the earlier caliphs, who controlled and commanded these riches, were inclined to lead a life of “poverty”. This “piety” impressed the momins who had to be satisfied with much less, and served to create many myths about Islamic “ideal of equality”. The “equality” never made any difference to the despotic power which the prophet and, later on, the caliphs had at their disposal.

Sweep of the Islamic Sword

The prophet of Islam had proclaimed that *allah* had assigned the whole earth to the *millat*. Not a patch was to be left for the kafirs to dwell. And no corner of the world was to be bereft of mosques from which the *muezzin* could call the “faithful” to prayer. But it seems that *allah*’s knowledge of geography was not so good. His prophet had not heard of many lands beyonds Syria, Iraq, Iran, Ethiopia and Egypt. He knew nothing about India and the Hindus which want of knowledge was to lead to a heated theological controversy later on.

Notwithstanding this lack of geographical knowledge, the prophet divided the world into two contending spheres—*darul-Islam* (the zone of peace) and *darul-harb* (the zone of war). The inhabitants of *darul-Islam*, that is, the muslims were commanded to wage unceasing war

upon *darul-harb* till the latter was converted into *darul-Islam*. The frontiers of *darul-Islam* were to be pushed progressively in all directions. The theory of Islamic imperialism was thus perfected by the prophet himself, like the latter-day theory of communist imperialism which Lenin elaborated as “international proletarian revolution”.

The whole of Arabia had been terrorized into surrendering to the sword of Islam by the time the prophet passed away in 632 A.D. The militarized *millat* which had “elected” an *amir-ul-mominin* in the same year, now started seeking fresh fields for the mission of Islam. Iran had exhausted herself in an unceasing war with the Roman empire. The provinces of the Roman empire in Asia and North Africa were seething with rebellion against persecution of “heresies” by the Church at Rome which had by now reduced every other ecclesiastical dispensation to a subordinate status. Iran and Roman provinces fell in quick succession after the armies of Islam first found out the feebleness of their defences, and then delivered decisive blows.

Thus, within a hundred years after the death of the prophet, the *amir-ul-mominin* at Damascus became the master of a mighty empire, spread over Spain, Sicily, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Khorasan and Sindh. It was a military triumph unprecedented in human history till that time. The triumph could be easily explained in terms of political and military causes and consequences. But the *mullas* chose to attribute it to the might of *allah* which had been “fully and finally thrown on the side of Islam”. Henceforward, there was no justification for anyone to dwell in the “darkness of *Kufr*”. The “light” of Islam was now accessible to all.

The newly conquered countries were inhabited not by thinly spread-out tribal settlements but by populous societies, urban and rural. It was no more possible for the momins to kill all kafirs who rejected Islam or capture and carry away all their women and children. Besides, the properties which the kafirs possessed, and the lands on which they lived, were so voluminous and vast. The *mullas*, therefore, developed a more elaborate theory of an Islamic state out of the embryo of principles which the prophet had already propounded.

The *millat* led by the *amir-ul-mominin* was, of course, the master class under the Islamic state. But this state had a mission larger than providing power and privilege to the *millat*. The state had to see to it that the kafirs who had been conquered were brought into the fold of Islam as fast as possible. The kafirs were, therefore, given, a new status—that of zimmis to start with. The zimmis were allowed to live under the aegis of an Islamic state, provided they agreed to pay *jiziya* (poll-tax) and other discriminatory taxes, and accepted a status of second class citizens placed under draconian disabilities. It was expected that the burden of taxes and the disgrace of disabilities would force the kafirs to get converted to Islam before long. The expectation was more than fulfilled in most countries except India and Spain. The kafirs in other countries were not only converted to Islam but were also brainwashed to fulminate against their own forefathers and forget that they had been conquered by a foreign race and creed.

The *mullas* applauded the concept of a *zimmi* and describe it as a privileged position because, “unlike the momins, the zimmis are exempted from military services”. It is difficult to know how the *mullas* arrived at this self-congratulatory

conclusion. They certainly did not consult any *kafir* to find out if he wanted to become a *zimmi* and be “exempted” from military service. The whole thing looks like a deliberate device adopted in order to disarm and emasculate a subject population. People who could not bear arms were in no position to defend themselves against Islamic barbarism which became more pronounced with the passing of every day, in direct proportion to the establishment of “peace” under the Islamic state.

The Islamic state allowed some time to the kafirs to “mend” their ways and receive the “true revelation”. But it had no patience for the religious and cultural institutions of the kafirs. It systematically destroyed and desecrated the temples and shrines of the kafirs, killed their priests, burnt their scriptures as well as secular literature, closed their schools and monasteries and heaped insult and injury on every precept and practice that they had cherished so far. It completed the job of “cleaning up” the scene as thoroughly, if not more, as the Christian Church had done earlier. The conquered lands were at the same time “adorned” with mosques, mazars and khanqahs in which the *mullas* mugged up the *quran* and the *hadis*, and the Sufis sermonized on the maqams they had “attained”.

Islam: An alibi for Arab Imperialism

For several centuries after its advent, Islam was an alibi for Arab imperialism. And it was an imperialism of a type which the world had not known so far. The Arabs not only imposed their ruthless rule and totalitarian creed on the countries they conquered; they also populated these countries with a prolific progeny which they procreated on native women. Every Arab worth his race “married” scores,

sometimes hundreds of these helpless women. Divorce of a wedded wife had been made very easy by the “law” of Islam. A muslim male could go on marrying and divorcing at the rate of several women during the span of a single day and night. What was still more convenient, there was no restriction on the number of concubines a muslim male could keep. The Arab conquerors used these male privileges in full measure. And in a matter of a hundred years, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and North Africa, which had been non-Arab countries for countless ages, became Arab countries in race, language and culture. Conversion was not confined to creed alone; it covered one’s blood as well.

The Arab power declined in due course. The mission of Islam was next taken over by the Turks whom the Arabs had converted earlier. It was the Turks who succeeded where the Arabs had failed—conquering Asia Minor, invading Central Asia, India and Eastern Europe. Asia Minor was wrested from Christianity, converted *en masse*, and populated by a prolific Turkish progeny. It is known as Turkey to-day. Central Asia, which was already Turkish, became Islamic as well. It was only in India and Eastern Europe that the Turks failed in the final round. But in both places, they crystallized colonies of native muslims to carry forward the politics of conversion under changed circumstances. The success achieved by this Islamic politics of conversion has been quite significant in India so far. How far that politics will progress in future depends upon whether Hindu society understands it or not, *at present*.

The Situation of Hindu Society Today

The state of Hindu society today presents a close parallel to the state of pagan societies in ancient Europe,

Asia and Northern Africa, on the eve of their subversion by politics of conversion called Christianity and Islam.

The pagan societies of the ancient world were also pluralistic societies like the Hindu society, accommodating several streams of social, cultural and spiritual traditions and allowing a large measure of autonomy to their constituent units. And like the Hindu society, these pagan societies also reacted instinctively against totalitarian ideologies like Christianity and Islam.

But these pagan societies were betrayed by their elite which had become spiritually bankrupt, morally neutral and intellectually devoid of discrimination—in short, self-forgetful and self-alienated. Hindu society to-day is being betrayed in a similar manner by its own elite.

The Hindu masses suspect the slogan of *sarva-dharma-sambhava* in the context of Islam and Christianity, and resist it instinctively. The instinct is very sound because it is supported by the historical experience of what the Hindus have suffered at the hands of these two political ideologies which came from outside, and as accomplices of imperialist invaders. It is the Hindu elite who must take full “credit” for circulating as genuine the counterfeit creeds of Islam and Christianity.

The elite was expected to know better, and in a more systematic manner, the true character of Christianity and Islam. The Hindu scholar was expected to study first-hand the “scriptures” and theologies of these two “religions”, and compare them with his own scriptures and philosophies. The Hindu historian was expected to survey and evaluate the record of these “religions” in countries and continents they had conquered. But the Hindu elite has failed to do it duty towards his society, culture and country.

Most of the time, the Hindu elite is either too pious to believe that “real” religion can be a cause for social or political discord; or too trusting to question the exclusive claims of any creed; or too devoid of discrimination to discern the fundamental difference between *Sanatana Dharma* on the one hand, and Islam and Christianity on the other; or too indifferent towards religion to count it as a subject of serious study; or too “forgiving” or too preoccupied with his “leadership of all sections of the Indian people” to notice any sentiments or susceptibilities which may divide them. In most members of the Hindu elite the psychological motive is mixed. But in every case the end result is the same—to be impervious to the continuing aggression from Islam and Christianity.

Some sections of the Hindu elite have become too self alienated to really care for the welfare of the society which gave them birth and brought them up. Most of the time they harbour a deep-seated animus against everything Hindu, and let no opportunity pass to harangue against their own heritage. They are the most privileged sections under the present dispensation, with whom it is difficult to have a dialogue on matters of life and death for Hindu society. They dismiss every Hindu cause with a shrug of the shoulders, if not with utter contempt. They are beyond any appeal of reason or evidence. They need psychiatric treatment.

What is worse, the Hindu elite in general is mortally afraid of being called ‘communalist’ by the missionary and the *mulla* or the muslim and christian elite which functions from all political platforms pledged to what passes as secularism in India at present. One is sure to invite this swear-word as soon as one takes cognizance of any Hindu

cause, however legitimate, or questions any claim or “grievance” which the “minorities” may cook up.

And most members of the Hindu elite get frightened out of their wits when the leftists in general and the communists in particular bounce upon them as “reactionary” and “revivalist,” working in league with “capitalism” and “imperialism”, the moment they espouse a Hindu cause.

Perverse Scholarship and Journalism

This atmosphere of self-forgetfulness, self-alienation, self-righteousness and swearology aimed exclusively at Hindu society, has given birth to a brand of scholarship and journalism which always draws wrong, even perverse conclusions from a right array of facts and premises which it itself marshals, many a time quite perceptively. We have witnessed a lot of such “scholarship” and “journalism” in the aftermath of Meenakshipuram. At the back of it all, there is a mind which can be summed up in one sentence—whatever be the facts, its conclusions are the same.

This mind starts by reporting that the spate of conversions to Islam is part of a plan to convert India into a muslim majority country. It quotes *verbatim* the spokesmen of Islam, in India and abroad, to the effect that huge financial resources are being mobilized in all muslim countries to help the conversion of Harijans. But it ends by citing the actual figures of Harijans converted in this or that town or village, and dismiss the whole affair as too small to justify the “hue and cry which the Hindus have raised”. In the final round, this mind concludes that short-term statistics are more meaningful than the long-term strategy.

This mind starts by warning Hindu society that this society is in for serious trouble unless it secures social justice for its underprivileged sections. But as soon as it finds that the RSS, the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Mathadhipatis and the Arya Samaj—the only organisations which work for the welfare of Hindu society—have entered the field for ensuring social justice to the Harijans, it starts shrieking about a “Hindu backlash” which endangers “communal harmony”.

This mind ridicules the Vishva Hindu Parishad for expressing satisfaction that the tide of mass conversions has been contained. It also quotes the spokesman of *Ishathul Islam Sabhai* of Tamil Nadu to prove that many more thousands are waiting to get converted in the next round, which may not be far off. But it sees a danger to secularism if the Vishva Hindu Parishad takes its warning seriously and starts putting in more effort.

This mind cites some significant instances of Harijans having committed atrocities on caste Hindu. It reports that quite often the caste Hindus who came in conflict with the Harijans were only slightly higher than the Harijans in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Its own analysis proves conclusively that the Harijans who clamour the loudest in favour of conversion belong, not to the lower strata of Harijan communities but to the prosperous and privileged Harijan elite which has emerged through the prevalent political process. Yet it concludes that there seems to be no other way of securing social justice from the “upper caste Hindus” except through conversion, and cites several authorities including Dr. Ambedkar in support of this conclusion.

This mind discovers through its own field-survey that most stories of police atrocities on Harijans are pure

concoctions, and that quite often the police saved the Harijans from the wrath of another community which the Harijans had wronged. It probes into the motives for conversion and finds that in most cases they are quite low such as the lust for a second “wife”, or the lure of gifts and employment in Gulf countries, or fear of conviction for crimes committed. It quotes those instances to prove that the muslims can always give a communal turn to any attempt by the police to arrest a criminal who has got converted to Islam in the meanwhile. Yet, when the same facts are cited by some Hindu leader or organization, this mind starts smelling “Hindu communalism trying to distort some significant sociological phenomena”.

This mind is on record for pressing the point that Kanyakumari district was a paradise of communal peace before the RSS and “other Hindu communal organizations” became active in that area. But it refuses to read the history of christian proselytization spread over several centuries as a result of which this district has become a christian majority district, so much so that the christians are emboldened to demand a change of its name from Kanyakumari to Kania Maria. An aggression which was not challenged was no aggression at all, according to the “moral” perceptions of this mind. On the contrary, the aggressor is he who challenges the aggression and tries to undo the wrongs perpetrated in the past.

To sum up, this mind sees India as a conglomeration of communities- Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Jats, Yadavs, Lingayats, Ezhvas, Harijans, Caste Hindus— and addresses them all from its olympian heights of secularism, national solidarity, non-violence, *dharmā*, and so on. It can never find anything to choose in the “unseemly” quarrels of these communities, whatever be

the nature of conflict or whoever may be the aggressor. If it is pointed out to this mind that the Hindus should not be thus divided into diverse communities, and that however divided the Hindus may be, they still constitute the nation in the only Hindu homeland, it gets alarmed by what it describes a “Hindu chauvinism,” and calls upon all “secular forces” to come together to save “our composite culture from an imminent danger.”

And in the midst of all its contradictions, this mind has a constant—for it, the Hindus must always be in the wrong, and the “minorities” must always have justice on their side.

The dominant Hindu elite and its confused, contradictory and, many a time, cowardly scholarship have become irrelevant, if not sinister, in the present situation when the politics of conversion has come out in the open, and is becoming progressively more powerful. A new and ideologically equipped Hindu elite has to emerge and restore the perspective if Hindu society has to be saved from the machinations of this politics.

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